

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

The Contribution of the Social Sciences to the Energy Challenge

September 25, 2007

10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

2318 Rayburn House Office Building

I am pleased that today's hearing will explore how energy-related policies are being shaped by social science research. I understand that it is very challenging to determine why people do what they do regarding energy, given all the variables in their lives. If Congress creates what looks like good policy, but which lacks an understanding of the primary drivers of decision-making, our policies may still fail. We must account for social factors when crafting energy policies.

Much of the basic research funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) examines the fundamental mysteries behind brain cognition and human behavior. Among other things, NSF studies the causes and consequences of social and cultural norms. I know many of my colleagues share my personal interest in developing policies to draw more students into the science and mathematics teaching profession. In that context, I believe that it is integral that the social science research work in tandem with educational research to evaluate not only how to best prepare teachers to teach, but to understand what would draw them and keep them in teaching. Perhaps if we continue this series of hearings we could delve into what incentives work best to encourage people to enter teaching professions as well as their willingness to stay in them.

Returning to the topic at hand today, I am particularly interested in what influences individuals to make energy efficiency decisions. We all assume that if people understood their return on investment from energy efficiency measures – say, home improvements to save on winter heating bills – then they would quickly make those changes. But I think our witnesses will share that it is much more complicated. We are not always as rational as we'd like to believe. Furthermore, being well-educated about energy efficiency does not necessarily translate into action. Consumers are a fickle bunch, especially in a society where individualism and personal freedoms are highly-cherished.

I thank the Chairman for investigating this important topic and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.